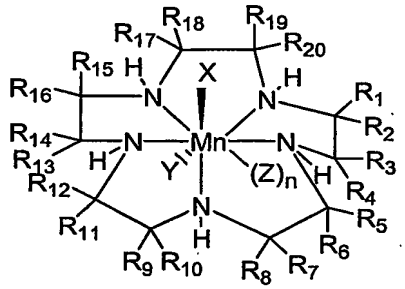
We Claim:

1. A method for preventing damage to the optic nerve head or retina which comprises administering a pharmaceutically effective amount of superoxide dismutase mimic of formula **I**:



I

wherein:

R^{1-20} are independently H, alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, or heterocycloalkenyl, each of which is optionally substituted with an alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

or two of the R groups on the same (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^2, or R^3 and R^4, or R^5 and R^6, *etc.*) or adjacent (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^3, or R^3 and R^5, or R^6 and R^7, *etc.*) sites, together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached, form an optionally unsaturated or aromatic C_{3-20} carbocycle, the carbocycle being optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo,

trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

or two of the R groups on the same (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^2, or R^3 and R^4, or R^5 and R^6, *etc.*) or adjacent (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^3, or R^3 and R^5, or R^6 and R^7, *etc.*) sites, together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached, form an optionally unsaturated or aromatic C_{2-20} nitrogen-containing heterocycle, the heterocycle being optionally substituted optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

it being understood that in all cases the nitrogens binding the Mn center in the drawing for **I** will lack hydrogens when the nitrogen is already trisubstituted (*e.g.*, when the relevant nitrogen is part of a pyridine ring);

X, Y, and Z are pharmaceutically acceptable anions; and

n is 0-3.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the damage is the result of ischemia and/or hypoxia.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the damage is associated with a condition selected from the group consisting of branch and central vein/artery occlusion, angle-closure glaucoma, open-angle glaucoma, anterior ischemic optic neuropathy, RP, retinal detachments, laser therapy, and surgical light induced iatrogenic retinopathy.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein for the compound of formula I:

R^7R^8C-N-CR^9R^{10} forms a 5-8 membered saturated or unsaturated (including aromatic) ring, the ring being optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

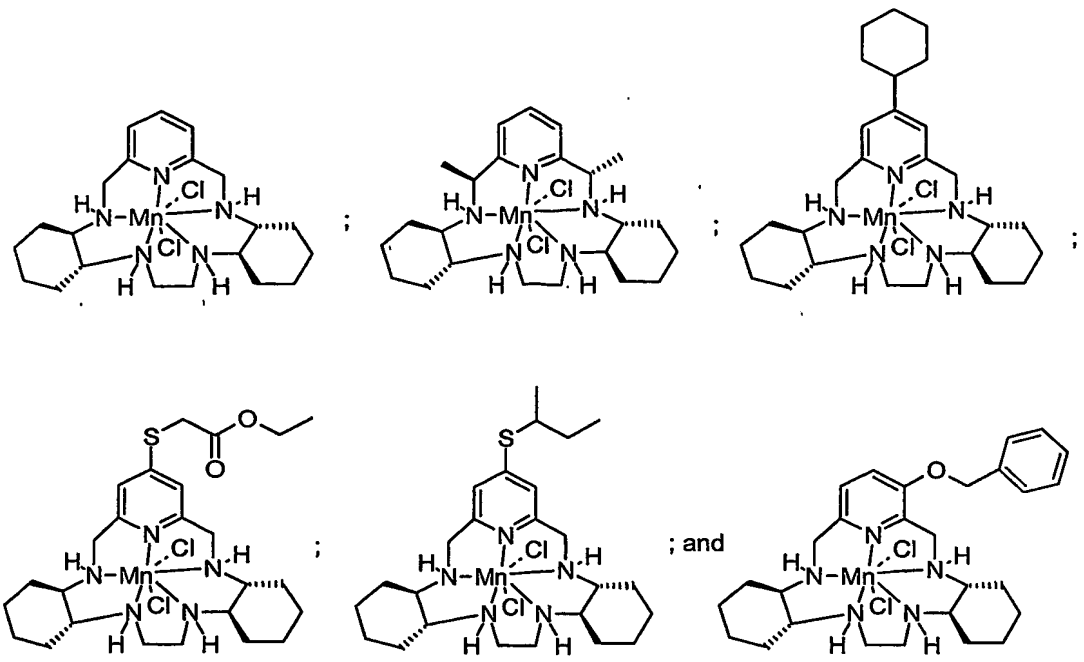
R^5, R^6, R^{11}, R^{12}, R^{17}, R^{18}, R^{19}, and R^{20} are the same or different and are H or alkyl;

R^1R^2C-CR^3R^4 and $R^{13}R^{14}C$-$CR^{15}R^{16}$ are the same or different and form a 5-8 membered saturated or unsaturated (including aromatic) ring, the ring being optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

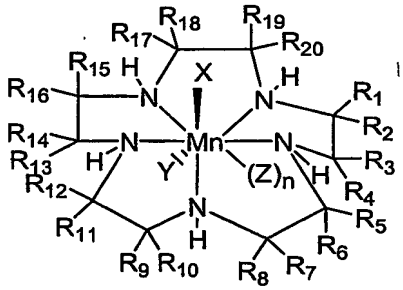
X and Y are chloride; and

n is 0.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the compound is selected from the group consisting of:



6. A composition for preventing damage to the optic nerve head or retina which comprises administering a pharmaceutically effective amount of superoxide dismutase mimic of formula **I**:



I

wherein:

R^{1-20} are independently H, alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, or heterocycloalkenyl, each of which is optionally substituted with an alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl,

heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

or two of the R groups on the same (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^2, or R^3 and R^4, or R^5 and R^6, *etc.*) or adjacent (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^3, or R^3 and R^5, or R^6 and R^7, *etc.*) sites, together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached, form an optionally unsaturated or aromatic C_{3-20} carbocycle, the carbocycle being optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

or two of the R groups on the same (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^2, or R^3 and R^4, or R^5 and R^6, *etc.*) or adjacent (*e.g.*, R^1 and R^3, or R^3 and R^5, or R^6 and R^7, *etc.*) sites, together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached, form an optionally unsaturated or aromatic C_{2-20} nitrogen-containing heterocycle, the heterocycle being optionally substituted optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

it being understood that in all cases the nitrogens binding the Mn center in the drawing for **I** will lack hydrogens when the nitrogen is already trisubstituted (*e.g.*, when the relevant nitrogen is part of a pyridine ring);

X, Y, and Z are pharmaceutically acceptable anions; and

n is 0-3,

and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

7. The composition of claim 6, wherein for the compound of formula I:

R^7R^8C-N-CR^9R^{10} forms a 5-8 membered saturated or unsaturated (including aromatic) ring, the ring being optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

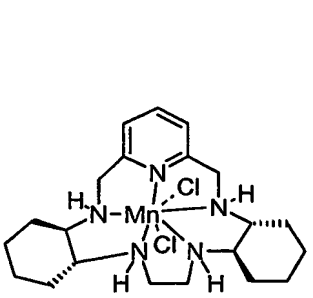
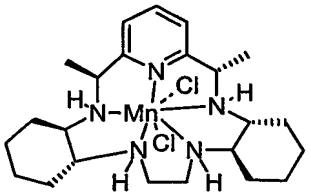
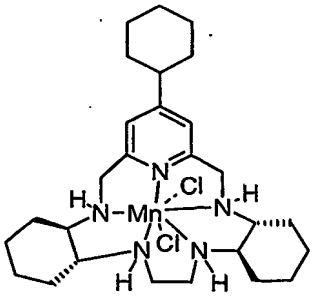
R^5, R^6, R^{11}, R^{12}, R^{17}, R^{18}, R^{19}, and R^{20} are the same or different and are H or alkyl;

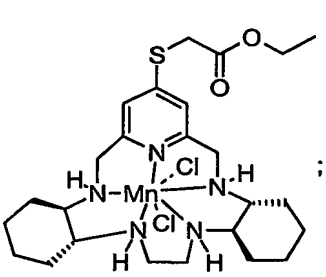
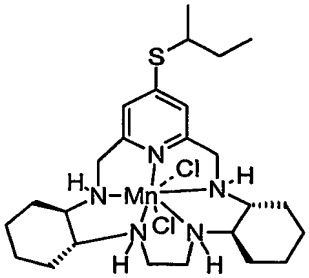
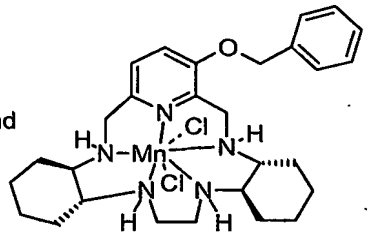
R^1R^2C-CR^3R^4 and $R^{13}R^{14}C$-$CR^{15}R^{16}$ are the same or different and form a 5-8 membered saturated or unsaturated (including aromatic) ring, the ring being optionally substituted with alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkenyl, halo, trihalomethyl, acyl, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylsulfonyl, or arylsulfonyl group, or a free or functionally modified hydroxyl, amino, or thiol group;

X and Y are chloride; and

n is 0.

8. The composition of claim 7, wherein the compound is selected from the group consisting of:


;

;

;


;

; and


9. The composition of claim 6, wherein the composition is a solution or suspension for topical ophthalmic administration, for depot administration or for intraocular injection.

10. The composition of claim 9, wherein the concentration of the compound in the composition is from 0.001 to about 5% w/v.